# GEOGRAPHIC NEWS BULLETIN

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THE NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY

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**A CORNER OF A CHEESE MARKET IN HOLLAND**

Officials are taking a tray-load of cheeses to the weigh-house. The picture shows how carefully the piles are covered until the market hour arrives. (See Bulletin No. 4.)

## HOW TO OBTAIN THE BULLETIN

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## The Canaries, Whose Primitive People Have a Whistling Language

AIRPLANE travel is causing a tremendous boom in oceanic real estate. Mid-ocean islands became more important with their use as coaling stations, then cable lines rescued other land dots, such as Yap, from obscurity. The Azores figured as a halfway station in the first trans-Atlantic flight. Later the Canaries, where Columbus halted on his voyage of discovery, ended the first leg of the Lisbon-to-Rio de Janeiro trip of Portuguese airmen.

If you will picture seven articles a juggler has just thrown into the air, and imagine these seven articles to be a pear, a shoulder of mutton, two golf balls, the broken off end of a putting iron, and a lady's fall hat with the visor down and a feather in the back—you will have a fair idea of one of the most interesting island groups in the world.

### Had Churches in Caves

Interesting, that is, whether you are looking for the people with a whistling language or the arboreal curiosity known as the dragon-tree, whether you choose to hunt for the archeological traces of aborigines who worshipped in caves or to mingle with the vivacious crowds in the Calle del Castillo of an evening when the band plays.

The highest mountain rising from the Atlantic Ocean is to be found on Teneriffe; a volcano crater on Palma is so large that its weather conditions vary from those of the surrounding country. This crater, Gran Caldera, is four miles in diameter and in much of its area is between 12 and 13 times as deep as the Washington Monument. The natives will tell you that a mighty upheaval in Palma pitched the mountain mass over to Teneriffe, and in proof point to the mighty cavity left on Palma.

### Plutarch's Geography Still Holds Good

Plutarch's geographical comment about the Canaries need not be revised. He said, "Rain seldom falls there, and then falls moderately; while they have usually soft breezes which scatter such rich dews that the soil is not only good for sowing and planting, but spontaneously produces the most excellent fruits; and those in such abundance that the inhabitants have only to indulge themselves in the enjoyment of ease and leisure. The air is always pleasant and salubrious, through the happy temperature of the seasons, and their insensible transition into each other."

The most remarkable and least studied phenomenon of the Canaries is the whistling language of the natives of Gomera. The townsfolk do not know the whistling vocabulary, and their reports of the range of expression the mountain folk attain by using four or five notes of varying intensity and length may readily be exaggerated. That such a language does exist, developed beyond the stage of signals, is attested by travelers. It is extremely useful in this little island of big distances and high mountains, where cattle raising is the principal industry. Here, too, some of the natives dwell in caves, as did the Guanches,



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THE WAY THEY ADVERTISE THEIR SUNSHINE AT YUMA, ARIZONA (see Bulletin No. 5).

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## Saying It With Clay

RECENT accounts of the uncovering of Kish by an English expedition need only a bit of interpretation to indicate its high value as news.

This tower, situated about eight miles east of Babylon, marks the site of the capital city of the first empire known to human history and the seat of the world's oldest known kings.

The tower of Babel was only one of the many such brick piles dating back to the period of the Sumerians and the early Semites. Its location is judged to have been at Nippur.

### Revision-Proof Documents

Occasional reports of a new find in Mesopotamia, the cradle land of our civilization, give an impression that modern knowledge of the Babylonians and Assyrians is sketchy. On the contrary, from thousands of clay tablets which have been recovered and read, the 2000-year span from Sargon, down through Hammurabi and Tiglath-Pileser, to Ashurbanipal, can be sketched more completely and accurately than the annals of many comparatively modern states.

The interest these records hold for modern man lies in the fact that, while many latter-day customs, ideals, and modes of thought date back to Jewish life of Old Testament times, these Jewish ideas were derived, in turn, from the far earlier Babylonian civilization.

Among the surprises these clay documents afford are the striking likenesses of a civilization of 4,000 years ago to that of the twentieth century.

One scholar avers that "a right-thinking citizen of a modern city would probably feel more at home in ancient Babylon than in medieval Europe."

### Abraham in Middle Ages of History

Another astounding revelation of these writings, according to Albert T. Clay, is that Israel, instead of being one of the foremost nations of antiquity, was a small power, relatively inconspicuous. Moreover, instead of the Patriarch, Abraham, belonging to the beginning of time, humanly considered, it is now found that he occupies a middle chapter in the history of mankind.

"But above all else," this writer continues, "one of the greatest surprises is that the earliest peoples, intead of being barbarous and uncultured, were civilized and possessed a culture of a high order. In fact, the greatest creations of the Babylonians in literature and art belong to the third and fourth, and perhaps earlier millenniums before Christ."

In one respect, it is pointed out, the historian of these early times has an advantage over his colleague who seeks details in documents written on paper. The baked and sun-dried tablets of the Babylonians may be hard to decipher but, when read, they are "original sources," reliable, and not altered or revised by subsequent generations.



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whose blood still flows in veins of the natives, though the pure type became extinct after the Spanish conquest early in the fifteenth century.

### Where Columbus Halted

On Gomera, also, is the village of San Sebastian, where Columbus provisioned his voyage to the unknown West, and there still stands the church which he attended to pray for the success of his quest. Few travelers visit the hill-encircled, red-roofed, isolated little village whence Columbus departed—September 7, 1492.

The Phoenician traders probably knew the Canaries, then the "Fortunate Islands": Homer's allusion to the "habitations of the blest" is thought to have referred to them. Legend clusters about them. Mythically they were the home of the Hesperides, scenes of Herculean adventures, and the visible traces of the lost continent of Atlantis.

In 1923 they constitute a health resort of note, are populated by some 500,000 people, export foodstuffs, fruits, vegetables, sugar and wine, and have an important wireless station. Telephones have been strung where roads are yet unknown and goats, mules and camels are the only common carriers that the mountains will allow. The combined area of the islands is about equal to that of Corsica. They are administered as a part of Spain.

**Bulletin No. 1, October 29, 1923.**

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## Form for Renewal of Bulletin Requests

Many requests for the Geographic News Bulletin were made for the year ending with this issue. If you desire the Bulletins continued kindly notify The Society promptly. The attached form may be used:

School Service Department
National Geographic Society
Washington, D. C.

Kindly send ..... copies of the Geographic News Bulletin for the school year beginning with the issue of April 9, for class room use, to

Name .....

Address for sending Bulletins.....

City ..... State.....

I am a teacher in..... school .....grade

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## More Traffic for Alaska

ONE MORE step in "opening up" Alaska was taken when the Government began operation of river boats on the Yukon and Tanana during the past summer.

Thus Fairbanks, interior metropolis of Alaska, becomes officially the place where rails and rivers meet. Fairbanks marks the apex of a traffic triangle with one leg planted at Seward, southern terminus of the Alaska Railway, and the other on Bering Sea where flow the waters of the Tanana and the Yukon.

### Yukon a Great River

The Yukon is one of the world's great rivers. If its mouth were at New York City its source would be near Salt Lake City.

The Tanana, the less familiar portion of the new government boat route, is the Yukon's chief southern tributary. It drains the vast Tanana Valley, rich in gold, other minerals, and virgin farm lands.

This Imperial Valley of the far north, as large as West Virginia, now has a white population of less than 7,000. In a dozen years after the first substantial gold output, in 1903, yellow ore worth $66,000,000 was mined.

### A Town of Flowers and Bird Houses

Steaming up the Yukon in summer time the visitor will reach a town of many flowers, where numerous homes have hothouses, some have bird boxes on their peaks, and practically all have vegetable gardens. Wild roses and Scotch blue-bells grow in the fields.

He rubs his eyes and exclaims "This can't be Alaska!" But it is, and Alaskans would have their fellow-Americans recover from the idea "due to misleading textbooks of generations gone" that theirs is a "forbidding, ice-covered, glacier-crowned land of dog teams and polar bears." The quotation is from a report of the territorial government, and it is repeated at every opportunity.

The Alaskans are not denying marked climatic differences from the States. A novelist recently sent the proof of a serial story he was writing to an Alaskan. This writer had the pitch-dark of a Fourth of July night illuminated by fireworks. The fireworks were all right—the Alaskan celebrates with the rest of us—but there is no night in July.

### Curfew Rings at 10 p. m.

Fairbanks had to pass a curfew law that all children must be put to bed summer evenings by 10 o'clock, lest the youngsters get inadequate rest. After your host has tucked the children to bed and taken you to a dance or to the "movies" it is a queer sensation to walk home in daylight.

The town of flowers and birds and gardens is Tanana. Turning into the river of that name the visitor is assailed by less pleasant evidences that Alaska is not all winter. Mosquitoes and mooseflies abound.



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## Process Is Described

The well-kneaded clay, which had been washed to free it from grit and sand was shaped, while in a plastic condition, into the form and size desired. As the style of paper used at the present time is frequently an indication of the character of the writing, the same is true, in a general way, of an ancient Babylonian clay tablet or cylinder. In most instances the trained Assyriologist at a glance can determine the character, in a general way, of an inscription by its shape or appearance.

The stylus, which was made of metal or wood, was a very simple affair. In the early periods it was triangular and in the latter quadrangular. By holding it beneath the hand between the thumb and second finger, with the index finger on top, and pressing the corner of it into the soft clay, the impression made will be that of a wedge; hence the term cuneiform (from the Latin *cuneus*) writing.

The cuneiform script, written upon clay, was employed by many different peoples of western Asia.

**Bulletin No. 2, October 29, 1923.**

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**THE RUINS OF A LIBRARY BUILDING 4,000 YEARS OLD: NIPPUR**

**This library yielded to the pick and shovel of the explorer thousands of tablets written in days antedating the era of Abraham. More than seven hundred contract tablets were discovered in one building at a depth of 20 feet below the surface.**

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## Holland: A Self-made Nation

THE SILVER JUBILEE and birthday of Queen Wilhelmina which was celebrated August 31 in every city, town and hamlet in Holland again called attention to a land where mankind has achieved one of his most notable victories over the forces of nature.

For the United Netherlands, familiarly known as Holland, the name of two of its eleven states, "is a country where the rivers run, so to speak, over the heads of the inhabitants. Populous cities rest below the level of the sea, which persistently clamors for admission. Cultivated fields are buried under unproductive sand, and marshes are drained to become fertile gardens. Islands have been attached to the continent by ropes of sand."

### Lacks Quarries and Timber

A communication to the National Geographic Magazine by James Howard Gore continues:

"Holland, without quarries, has erected stately buildings and substantial cities and faced miles of seacoast with protecting pavement; almost without timber, she has built navies which have disputed the sea with the most powerful fleets.

"Lacking raw materials, Dutch ships have made it possible for factories to run, and Dutch ships have carried finished products to distant lands. With neither coal nor oil to drive the needed machines, the air blowing over Holland has been made to pay toll, and the revolving wings of countless windmills transform this toll into energy.

"It is not astonishing that even a sterile country should, by cultivation, produce grain and stock, but it is surprising that Holland should exist, and its existence is a paradox in physical geography.

### Before Birth of the Rhine

"Before the birth of the Rhine a great part of the Netherlands, as we now see it, was a sea, limited on the German side by a rocky coast which now shows itself in the Tuetoburger Wald Hills. The uplifting of the Ardennes inclosed a sea in the interior of Germany which, shielded by the Alps on its southern coast and protected from the cold winds of the north, became full to overflowing from the melting ice. Finally the pent-up waters broke through, and in the bed thus formed, the Rhine has since been flowing.

"With the rush of the waters, masses of rocks were hurried along until the moving force exhausted itself; smaller particles were carried farther, and when the sea was reached its resistance robbed the river of its final burden, and sand-dunes formed the northern boundaries of Holland. The pebbles and grains of sand on which rests the soil of Gelderland and Overyssel and the island of Texel show that their primeval home was the basalt regions of the Rhine.



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The Tanana is broad and placid. Green willows and poplars push out over the water's edge, for the earth banks are soft and the dirt melts away as in many places the water digs a cave beneath.

Often turning and twisting, your boat will pass Tolovana where, on a clear day Mt. McKinley, a hundred miles away, is visible. Farther on is Nenana, until recently the terminus of the standard-guage Alaska railroad from Seward. Formerly passengers had to change here to the narrow-guage line to Fairbanks. With the opening of the 700-foot single-span bridge across the river at this point, the narrow gauge was converted to the standard track-width and trains ran through.

The government railway made Nenana a busy little town of neat buildings and up-to-date stores. So anxious are its citizens for a "spotless town" ideal that they prohibit any dogs within a mile of their community.

The next town is Chena, which hopes to wrest future laurels from Fairbanks as the St. Louis of inland Alaska.

## Electric-Lighted Chicken Coops

Then Fairbanks! Here, as in Dawson, sandwiches once cost a dollar apiece, fortunes were dug up and squandered, and the hilarity of a big city's night life extended through the 24 daylight hours.

Today Fairbanks retains little trace of a mining town. It has electric lights, stores, telephones, an agricultural college, jitneys run out to nearby towns and camps, and its women are reputed to be the most modishly dressed in the territory.

The electric lighting plant is used for the chicken houses as well as homes in the dark winter, small farms and dairies are springing up around the city, and their celery, growers insist, is on Fairbanks tables before that of Massachusetts reaches Boston consumers.

Fairbanks has its slogan, too, like its sister cities back in the States. It wants more roads and railroads, and capital for development of its surrounding coal fields. Therefore its appeal, about to be realized in part, "Give us the railway and motive power, and we will pay the nation's war debt!"

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## How Sunshine and Clouds Mean Dollars and Cents

THE reported payment of an insurance claim for $1,500 because clouds kept a group of scientists from taking pictures of an eclipse of the sun, brings up questions of sunshine and cloudiness in various parts of the United States, which may run into dollars and cents at other times than during occasional eclipses.

Just as there is a "population center," a "wealth center," and a "geographical center" of the United States, so there is a "sunshine center" and a "cloud center."

### The U. S. Sunshine Center

Most of the familiar "centers" lie east of the Mississippi River, but the country's "sunshine center" breaks this precedent and is situated in the extreme Southwest, near the mouth of the Colorado River. Yuma, Arizona, furnishes the dot on the map on which to place a compass and draw the circle into which the sunbeams pour almost ceaselessly during daylight hours. Only 18 days in the average year can be called cloudy in Yuma and in a roughly circular area about 100 miles from the city in every direction.

### Sunshine and Clouds

Considering the length of the days as well as their number, the region around Yuma and embracing the southwestern third of Arizona gets 85 per cent of all the sunbeams aimed at it during the year, while 80 per cent of all the sunshine that could be received hits the mark in the southeastern end of California, practically the whole of Arizona, southwestern New Mexico and the little sharp westernmost point of Texas around El Paso.

Sunshine runs into dollars and cents in this region because the line of "80 per cent sunshine," or perhaps the slightly larger 75 per cent line, may be said to enclose the section of the United States which sells its climate on a year-round basis to thousands of tourists, out-door enthusiasts and health-seekers.

### Compensations for Cloudy Regions

Nature has given compensations for a lack of sunshine. As the percentage of fair days grows less and less outward from the "sunshine center," the rainfall grows greater and greater, so that agriculture may flourish without irrigation. But after the mouth of the Mississippi has been passed, the sunshine lines double northward, putting southern Florida practically into the 75-per cent sunshine area. Here again sunshine means dollars and cents for Miami and Palm Beach and their fellow resorts.

The "cloud center" of the United States is in a little region in western Washington near the southernmost indentation of Puget Sound. Half the days there are cloudy and an additional 30 per cent are partly cloudy. About the little center is a large area of only slightly less marked cloudiness.



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## Peculiarities of Deltas

"The result of the conflict between the waters of the rivers and the sea into which they seek to find an outlet is seen in the deltas of our largest streams.

"The struggles of the Danube have formed about its mouth vast tracts of marsh lands; the Mississippi finds its way into the Gulf of Mexico through six channels, which are with great difficulty kept deep enough to carry the discharging flood; the Nile demands a breadth of 120 miles through which to force its vacillating outlets into the Mediterranean.

"So Holland is the present of the Rhine—that Rhine which rushes over the rocks of Schaffhausen, spreads out boastfully before Mayence, passes tumultuously under the fortress of Ehrenbreitstein, and beats in sonorous cadence at the foot of the Seven Mountains.

## Where a River Dissipates

"Before reaching the Dutch frontier it has lost all the beauty of its banks, and flows in great, lazy curves suggestive of approaching old age. The indecision of senility is now seen in the separation of the Rhine into two parts. The main branch shamefully disavows its name and throws itself into the Meuse, a river of French origin; the other branch, insulted by the name of Dannebrog Canal, after going nearly to Arnheim, separates into two parts, one emptying into the Zuider Zee; the other, regaining its early name, though qualified as the Lower Rhine, goes as far as Duurstede, where it divides for the third time.

"One of these branches, like the fugitive from justice, changes its name and unites with the Maas near Rotterdam; the other still clinging to its old name, reaches with difficulty Utrecht, where for the fourth time it submits to a further partition.

"One part, denying its once boasted name, drags itself to Muiden, where it unites with the Zuider Zee; the other, called the Old Rhine, flows slowly to Leyden, whose streets it languidly crosses. Then gathered into a canal, it is carried to its death in the North Sea."

## Clouds Mean Water Power Dollars in Northwest

In the region around the country's "cloud center" there is another sort of dollars and cents compensation. The cloudiness in this case is accompanied by heavy rain and snowfall and these, with the high mountains of the region, furnish the ingredients which give the State of Washington a greater potential water power than that of any other state in the Union.

There are two secondary "cloud centers" in the east. On the southeastern shore of Lake Ontario and in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan between Lakes Superior and Michigan three quarters of the days in a year are either cloudy or partly cloudy.

**Bulletin No. 5, October 29, 1923.**

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**THE PALMS ARE AN IMPORTANT FACTOR IN MAKING THE CANARIES PICTURESQUE**

**(See Bulletin No. 1)**